

Selecting Books for Interactive Reading Transcript

My name is Shelley Gray. I'm an associate professor in the Department of Speech and Hearing Science at Arizona State University. That's in Tempe, Arizona. And I'm the principal investigator of the Tempe Early Reading First partnership. We use the Trophies Preschool curriculum and we augmented that quite a bit. But in that curriculum there's a thematic unit. So we chose some books because they were part of the curriculum and we also augmented that.

Our goal for the program was that children would read four different types of books every week. Read and re-read or have them read to them. So the first type was a narrative book. The second would be expository, or books that teach you things, facts. A third would be a pattern book, and this could be a pattern text like rhyming book or it could be a pattern in the sentence structure. And then the fourth, which was part of the Trophies curriculum, was a nursery rhyme kind of book or a single page of a nursery rhyme.

So our classrooms read those four types of books each week. And we did that because each type plays an important role in children's understanding of different types of text. When they're reading these kinds of text for themselves, they'll have a better idea of structure, of the structure and how you get meaning from them later on if they've had a lot of exposure to them while they're in preschool.

So some books, of course, fit across several different categories, but the true narratives—it's important to understand that there's got to be a problem in the story, an attempt to fix the problem, and a resolution. And true narratives are pretty hard to find. That's why some children's classics are classics. The expository books provide information. An example of a pattern book is *Chicka Chicka Boom*

Boom, which has a lot of repetition in the sentence structure and in the rhyming. And then a nursery rhyme like “Little Boy Blue,” or something like that.

We also have some other criteria for selecting books. They have to be an appropriate size for reading to small groups of children. And we always read in small groups or individually. They need to represent quite a wide range of language abilities, since we have young children and older children and some children with disabilities. They really need to hold the interest of preschoolers and they need to be able to be read in a reasonable amount of time.

They also need to write an objective for each particular reading of that book and put that in the daily lesson plans. And so if it's part of your lesson planning, you need to know why you're reading the book that day and what you intend to teach. We usually help teachers prepare sticky notes to put in the books and that provides cues to them, the kinds of questions they might want to ask the children or the prompts that they want to give based on the teaching objective for that reading. They need to collect supporting teaching materials as pre-teaching or extension, or—for instance, puppets are the kinds of things they might use to enact the story while they're reading it. They need to check the translation of the book. If they're—if it's a book in Spanish or another language, make sure that someone who is familiar with the language and is a native speaker in your area reads it so that they know that it's an accurate translation.

They need to purposefully select the children who will hear the book together, so that could be for behavioral reasons or language reasons or ability levels. But they need to think ahead of time what children will be grouped together and how small of a group that they'll read to.

When you're thinking about selecting books for a thematic—to go with your themes or using dialogic reading, I don't think you can select books just based on age. I think it's really important to think about the children's oral language level, also the experience they've had with books and their attention span. So if every child in a small group isn't engaged when you're reading a book, then something needs to happen so that an adjustment can be made. And by watching the children carefully and watching their reaction to what you're doing, that helps you tailor your book selection to them.

Our teachers learn that you don't have to read a book all at once and that you can modify the text. That's important for matching children's language level. You don't have to read every page—if it's an expository book, a long book, just to get key pages. Sometimes children learn a lot from these books that are really too advanced for them, so you don't have to read the text, you can just look at the pictures and think ahead of time about what you'd like to say about them.

The main thing is to pick books purposefully that match your theme, that teach your vocabulary, that are real interesting to the children, that are large enough that everyone in a small group can see it. And then it's up to the teacher, through their preparation, to individualize the book to the particular small group that they're reading to.